

Many New PLAYS for OCTOBER NIGHTS



SENATOR BALDWIN
(EDWARD FIELDING)
and
MRS. LANGLEY
(LUCILE WATSON)



JUDITH
DOES A
FANDANGO
WITH
TOD (JAMES RENNIE)
at the
GUITAR.



"IT WAS A MOONLIGHT NIGHT ON MAY" CONFESSES JUDITH
(RUTH CHATTERTON) IN "MOONLIGHT BRIZ HONEYUCKLE"
LEFT TO RIGHT—COURTNEY BLUE
(CHARLES TROWBRIDGE) TOD MUSGRAVE
(JAMES RENNIE) SENATOR BALDWIN
(EDWARD FIELDING) CONGRESSMAN HAMILL
(SYDNEY BOOTH)

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

DAVID BELASCO has made out of Avery Hopwood's little play at the Lyceum Theatre a shimmering bit of color, iridescent as sea foam and about as substantial. Certainly "The Gold Diggers" is not as near to nature as the spray, since it is from the first word to the last of the theatre. Not a phrase suggests any observation of life. The chorus girls are the *Mabels* and *Mamies* of the comic papers and the burlesques. The heroine, so expertly and charmingly portrayed by Ina Claire, goes so far as to quote Savoy and Brennan. They all belong to the world of that talented member of the partnership who says "And you haven't heard the half of it," whichever that be.

Such is the life of the chorus girl as it is to be observed on the stage of the Lyceum Theatre. Of course, it is easy to think of a more realistic treatment of the theme, but it is not possible to conceive of one more closely suited to the taste of the day in the theatre. There is not a serious minute in the kaleidoscope as Mr. Belasco shakes it from minute to minute to form another gay picture of the butterflies. At first they settle about the couch of the oldest and most experienced of their group to listen to her words of worldly wisdom. She is the arch pirate of the crew, and it is not the first time that Jobyna Howland, in her character as the avowed exploiter of the other sex, has uttered the sentiments which crystallize in the new play in such phrases as "Alimony is a woman's life insurance." Nearly the whole of the first act is occupied by this female minstrel first part, as it were.

But there is never monotony, however shallow the waters may become at times. There is a dance in the second act, a dance "off" with the same group of merry designers on the possession of the other sex in attendance, occasionally breaking into the drawing room and then disappearing again, but always bringing into view a fresh play of color and movement to allure the senses. The view of the gold digger's existence is undeniably rosy, but that was not to be avoided in a play of such dainty shades and colors as Mr. Belasco has made this manuscript. One has the feeling that the experienced hand has had more than its usual share in bringing the pretty success to "The Gold Diggers" which it is certain to enjoy.

The virtues of Mr. Hopwood as dramatist of "The Gold Diggers" are chiefly of restraint. He strings his girls and their adventures along a thin thread of fiction. "I take your place," says the resourceful girl of the chorus to her lover's friend, "and will so conduct myself that the cruel uncle will be glad to have his young nephew marry anybody so long as he escapes such a creature as me." The plot against the uncle is not probable, but it serves to carry Ina Claire through all the scenes that are so carefully set to show her virtuosity. She admits to seventy cigarettes a day—"Lizdie the Dope" they call me," is her explanation—dances a fandango

in the piece, since it affords a suggestion that the legend of the chorus girl is very different from the fact and that she knows it.

What would have happened to this product in less skilful hands than Mr. Belasco's it is impossible to conceive. But he is the past master at embroidering. From even less promising soil he has been able to grow the same exquisite, flowering leaves to wave their colors gayly in the sunlight to the delight of all who watched them. He had only to set a cloud of butterflies, shaking their wings of gold and azure, rose and violet, swarming through Mr. Hopwood's three thin acts to make a fairy story that is always irresistibly comic and always a delight to every sense.

The cultivated tribunal to which plays are submitted to the stage was not always perhaps the appalling mixture of human society that it is today. Employees of newspapers compelled in the course of their duties to submerge in this tawdry group a few times every week have noticed a gradual degeneration. Yet more or less frequent contact with the gang has dulled the consciousness of many to its character. One can become accustomed to the crowd on Broadway, cease to observe the rat faced men in the tight fitting suits and the hard faced women with more glitter in their gold teeth than in their dull eyes. They have become a matter of course. A stranger who happened the other night to view this gathering for the first time retired in resentment to his rural home and more in sorrow than anger set down his shocked impressions. He did not think much of the units that compose a first night audience in New York.

Yet there has appeared this year an even more sinister note in the mood of this gang. It has always seemed possible to die in one of several ways during the first night performance. There is frequently ennuil as a possible cause. Then one may well pass out from mortification at having any part in a proceeding so benighted from a literary, artistic and social point of view. Social here is meant in its larger sense. But the prospects of a violent death were until this season fairly remote.

But this year there is more than the usual peril in attending these representations. At a recent performance in one of the best theatres a man in a dinner jacket, hurrying to his seat after an intermission, threw on the floor a lighted cigarette. It was lying in the centre of the aisle, smoking and glowing when a fellow first nighter, responding to some unexpected intimation of civilization, stepped on the embers. When a crowd gathered recently at the cradle of another dramatic masterpiece the audience rushed out after the first act in search of air or any other available relief. At the head of the aisle a well dressed spectator lit a cigarette. For the time it took him to reach the crowded entrance through which the spectators were slowly passing one by one he enjoyed himself puffing smoke into the faces of those about him.

Such is the 1919 model of first nighter who may not be any more objectionable than his predecessors but is assuredly more dangerous. His activities have hitherto been rather annoying than perilous. Eating during the representations, the rattling of paper bags, the crackling of caramel wrappers, drawn surreptitiously from dusty pockets—all these details of first night deportment may have been annoying as they diverted the interest of spectators from the work of genius they were contemplating. But there was no danger of fire before this fall.

One of the continuing nuisances connected with the occasions is the delay in raising the curtain. Ten minutes to 9 is the usual hour, although it often happens that 9 o'clock has arrived before the play begins. Just what may be the object in beginning so late it is not easy to tell. From a quarter to half an hour is the usual delay after the time announced by the management.

Often the public is present long before the play commences. It prefers,



SENATOR BALDWIN (EDWARD FIELDING)
TOD MUSGRAVE (JAMES RENNIE) COURTNEY
BLUE (CHARLES TROWBRIDGE) SUSPECTING
EACH OTHER.

however, to exhibit itself at the entrance. While the men and women preen themselves in the lobby, the few patient souls that have arrived on time, having again been misled by the advertisements, cool their heels inside. They have come to see the play, not to gaze at the moving picture actresses, retired chorus girls, dress and wig makers, that pose for the benefit of one another, since nobody outside their particular world takes the trouble to glance at them. But it is nevertheless on account of this exhibition in the lobbies of the theatres that plays begin so late.

The theatre is just now enjoying un-

precedented prosperity. No play is poor enough to fail. All the musical pieces, whatever the quality of their melodies or their jokes, endure for a certain profitable period. The managers modestly attribute this prosperity to the effect of prohibition rather than to their own wisdom. The men and women no longer loiter in restaurants without creme de menthe or fin champagne, curacao or chartreuse or a little more champagne. On to the play, let them be unconquered! In spite of this haste there is the inevitable delay at the first performance. Maybe that, too, will come to an end when the cigarettes are no longer thrown on

the floor and the succulent sound of chewing gum is not heard in the land.

Cosmo Hamilton is not the only dramatist to introduce the New York public this season to the delights of a sleeping porch. The last act of "An Exchange of Wives" passes in this elysian retreat. The second act of "Rolly Boly Eyes," which Edgar Allan Woolf wrote for Eddie Leonard, has for its background a similarly cozy and sanitary interior. It seems, moreover, to be richer in imagination than the comedy at the Bijou Theatre since this sleeping porch is divided into two parts. On the four beds in one sleep the young women of the family wearing black lace pajamas over bare skin.

The other half of the balcony is devoted if possible to a lovelier scene when the wife of one of the minstrels draws aside the curtain. On four beds sleep the same number of black-face comedians. An empty champagne bottle stands by each couch. But it is only by the pretence of ordering another bottle that the mokes are coaxed to rise. It is a sweet sight. The home life of the negro minstrel is rarely exposed so frankly to the view of the world. Thus it has happened that never before has the public had the chance to gaze on four burnt cork virtuosos sleeping off excessive champagne.

Mr. Cort has selected some negro minstrels of another type than the gentle Eddie Leonard to throw the methods of that actor into contrast. They are some of the old time, polysyllabic kind who manipulate their lips in complicated fashion to emit the least word and sputter mightily over every utterance. Some of them seemed rather asthmatic the other night. They all did an amount of mouthing and puffing out of all proportion to the amusement they caused. But they did throw the comparatively polite humor of Mr. Leonard into agreeable relief.

It was a wonderful idea of the dramatist to have Mr. Leonard the wayward son of a respectable family who had been put into a false light through no fault of his own. Of course it was necessary even in such a play to explain in some way the mixture of the whites and the negroes. So there is the observation from one of the black actors that the men have been too busy to wash off their "makeup." For that reason the morning sun shone on four blinking mokes as they slowly awoke from the slumber of champagne.

But this is scarcely a satisfactory explanation as to the continued blackness of tint on the part of the minstrels. Their intimate intercourse would, however, be scarcely understood, for instance in the South whatever explanations might be made for the black skins. Indeed, the booking of a journey for this particular play should its career at the Knickerbocker Theatre be suddenly ended might be difficult. The state of the public feeling is such that in certain towns the sight of the white and black

Where the Plays Change.

SHUBERT-RIVIERA — Alice Brady will come up out of the subway here in "Forever After," with the same cast that made her run down town in this Owen Davis play look as though it would run as long as the title.

STANDARD—Robert B. Mantell, supported by Genevieve Hammer and Fritz Leiber, will present his repertoire of "King Lear," "The Merchant of Venice," "Richard III," "Macbeth" and "Richard III," in a way to add materially to the culture of upper Broadway.

ple treatment is the most alluring kind for the flappers. But when it comes to the married women, the flirtatious married women who do not know which husband they want, this method of dealing with the dramatic climax is not sufficient. Imagination refuses to be stimulated by the sight of this lady in various situations which in the case of the flapper would be of undoubted interest.

So when Mr. Hamilton again takes his pen in hand to set down in his literary fashion the results of his studies of life it is probable that he will leave off his investigations of married people. They, at all events, do not pay. A flapper in bed is worth two wives on a porch.



ETHEL BARRYMORE IN "DECLASSEE"



JULIA MARLOWE WITH E. H. SOTHERN IN "TWELFTH NIGHT"

THE WEEK'S OFFERINGS.

MONDAY—Shubert Theatre: E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe, with "Twelfth Night," will start their four weeks season to make Shakespeare once more a household word. This play will be performed during the entire first week, with Mr. Sothern pulling his mustachios as *Malvolio* and Miss Marlowe strutting as *Viola*. In the company are Alma Kruger, Norah Lamson, Kate Wilson, Virginia Wells, Ursula Faucit, Frederick Lewis, Henry Stanford, Rowland Buckstone, Frank Peters, T. S. Crawley, Malcolm Bradley, V. L. Granville, Vernon Kelso, Colville Dunn, Boyd Clark, J. Latham, W. P. Adams and some lightning change scenery.

Empire Theatre: Charles Frohman, Inc., will present Ethel Barrymore in "Déclassée," by Zoe Akins, which is reported to be a comedy of wholesale proportions, gravitating between London and New York and requiring more than a corporal's guard in the cast. The company includes Claude King, Vernon Steel, Beatrice Beckley and Katherine Harris, to mention only the vanguard.

Eltage Theatre: "The Girl in the Limousine," by Wilson Collison and Avery Hopwood, will be produced by A. H. Woods, who since the days when he presented "The Girl in the Taxi" has grown much more prosperous and can now afford limousines for his farce heroines. The principal assets of the company are John Cumberland, Doris Kenyon, Zella Sears, Charles Ruggles and a boudoir set.

Liberty Theatre: Raymond Hitchcock will put on "Hitchy-Koo, 1919," the third of his world's series. He promises 100 entertainers, to relieve some of the strain on his own barytone voice. They are mostly girls under 20, and Lillian Kemble Cooper, Sylvia Clark, Ruth Mitchell, Florence O'Denishawn and Eleanor Sinclair are chief among the blushing blossoms. A ballet of real Indian maidens will cut loose. George V. Hobart wrote the revue, Cole Porter stuffed in the music and Josef Urban, Robert Law and Carmine Vitolo inserted the scenery.

TUESDAY—Booth Theatre: A. H. Woods will come right back with "Too Many Husbands," a comedy in which W. Somerset Maugham satirizes an attempt to straighten out a matrimonial map in British society after the war. Kenneth Douglas, Estelle Winwood, Lawrence Grossmith and Fritz Williams are the leaders in this league of fine passions.

Globe Theatre: Fritz Kreiser will make his debut in the musical comedy field when Charles Dillingham produces "Apple Blossoms," to which the violinist, in association with Victor Jacobi, applied the music, while William Le Barne rubbed in the book. The company comprises John Charles Thomas, Wilda Bennett, Florence Shirley, Percival Knight, Roy Atwell and the usual Globe trotters.

Forty-fourth Street Theatre: The Shuberts will present McIntyre and Heath in "Hello Alexander," a new fruit off an old tree. The musical extravaganza was written by Edgar Smith and Emily M. Young, with lyrics by Alfred Bryan and music hot off the piano of Jean Schwartz. Sophie Tucker and her jazz band, Vivian Holt, Lillian Rose-dale, Gabrielle Gret and Rosie Quinn support the stars in their trying moments in the ever ready livery stable.